1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

553 it refers to a family event, such as Gambo, "the person who was born after twins." Names, then, reflect many of the social relationships and social circumstances of the individual being named and his relationship to those around him. However, the main point of the naming ceremony is quite clear. As one Kanuri put it,

> We celebrate the naming because the child and the family are fortunate; the infant has escaped death and entered successfully into life; it is therefore a joyful occasion.

Infancy

• 858 For the first eighteen months of his life a child is referred to exclusively as *tiful* or new-born infant without anyone referring to its age. The period marks the beginning of the infant's membership in society and its most obvious sign is breast-feeding. Perhaps the best single word to describe the infant period is that of "introduction," for during these first few months the baby is introduced to the family, to friends of the family, the neighborhood, the ward, indeed to the community as a whole.

152 867 593 [825] Any jealousy or antagonism felt towards the new baby by its older brothers and sisters is recognized as such and dealt with firmly but gently. Even cats are supposed to be jealous of new babies and are prevented by adults from coming near them. Very often an older brother or sister is sent away from the house to a nearby compound during the period of the birth, especially if there is a grandparent living close by. On the day of the naming ceremony all the older children in [431] the family up to the age of ten receive little gifts in honor of the occasion. At one ceremony we saw a little boy of two and a half being brought back from the grandparent's house where he had been living for about a week. He was brought to the new infant and told, "This is our new baby. Be kind to him and look after [431] him." All the children of the household were given little gifts that same day and told the same thing. After the ceremony was over many of the women in the compound devoted some time to playing with the children and showing them affection. Everyone pointed out repeatedly what a fine thing it was for the children to have a new brother in the family. If during the next few weeks the older children should show any signs of hostility they are sent away again to another compound for periods up to a month or two. At this new compound they are told again and again about the necessity of showing affection and being responsible for younger brothers and sisters. In other words, "sibling rivalry" is understood, anticipated, and dealt with in a way that reduces tensions and calmly recognizes the normality of an older child's jealousy when all attention turns to a new baby in the family.

854 593 The new infant spends most of its first eighteen months with its mother. However, short sorties with older sisters occur now and then. On the other hand, the father has very little to do with the child at this stage, although he often comes by to see it. The baby soon learns to sit quietly while it is swaddled in a straddling-sitting position on its mother's back. Toilet training at this stage is minimal. The 863 mother, rather than the child, tries to learn when the child is likely to urinate. At first the child is merely wiped clean by the mother, but as soon as it can sit up, it is placed astride her ankles with its back resting on her upturned feet. A little hole is

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dug in the sandy soil between the ankles and the infant then has a simple and comforting toilet ready made for it by the mother. Afterwards its loins are washed and the hole covered up with sand. During the entire infant stage breast-feeding is carried on easily and simply upon demand by the infant for the breast. Indeed the breast is generally used as a pacifier.

A typical scene in a mother's hut illustrates the way in which the introduction of a new baby to society is carried out. The mother and her friends sit around chatting and they pass the baby around, dandling it in turn, although the baby remains with the mother for a large part of the time. A very common topic of conversation at such times is, quite unsurprisingly, the new baby. But unlike a similar group of American ladies most of the talk is *to* and not *about* the baby. The mother and many of those present tell the uncomprehending infant in sing-song voices about its kindred, "So-and-so is your father, so-and-so is your brother, so-and-so is your sister," and so on through a vast complex of kinship links on both the mother's and the father's side of the family. The infant is also told in the same way about its neighborhood, its section of the town, or its village, its political leaders, and so on. "So-and-so is your village head, so-and-so is your district head, and this is your tribe and this is your emirate, and this is your *Shehu*, and so-and-so is your Waziri." The family occupation is also mentioned and how soon the infant is going to help in such-and-such activities around the compound and grow up into successful adulthood within the framework of all the associations and expectations that are referred to constantly.

Why tell a baby about its social connections, occupational expectations, political affiliations, and so on? Certainly later on, when it can understand a little more of the language, such talk is a means of initiating it into the social groupings of the society. However at this stage another function is performed. The child is a new member of the society, and it is being introduced into and given a recognizable place in its social setting. The new member means new relationships. So-and-so who did not have a younger brother's son, now has one; someone else now has a new cousin and perhaps a future spouse; or someone else now has a sister's son or an additional one. The coming of the *tiful* or infant creates changes because a new member has been added and in introducing it to society people are asked to shift their understanding of the organizations which now must include this new member. By constantly referring to these new relationships during the infant's first few months people close to the family affirm to themselves and finally to others the fact that many relationships are different now that the new baby has arrived safely.

As far as training goes, the *tiful* is too young to be very harshly dealt with or to be told not to do this or that. Its primary task is to survive and grow into a useful, law-abiding, member of its community.

Childhood

Infancy ends as weaning begins, about the end of the eighteenth month although a good deal of variation exists in actual practice so that many are weaned earlier. In general weaning is carried out with a matter-of-fact attitude as if to say,

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

862 "This is just a common, everyday matter," and should not be thought of as giving anyone any trouble. When difficulties do arise an older woman of the compound or the family offers her breast as a pacifier. In the odd case where this does not succeed pressures tighten up. The breast is referred to as "dirty" or specifically as "excreta" and in extreme instances bitter grounds of leaves are put on the breast and the lesson is very quickly learned.

861 863 858 [516] [826] After weaning, pressures are slowly brought to bear to teach the child proper ways of living among its people. Thus as soon as a child can totter, the adult woman in whose hut he is sleeping starts to enforce the rule that he or she should go outside to perform toilet functions, stoop over with knees bent and buttocks near the ground using only the left hand for any attentions necessary to elimination. Later on as language skills develop the importance of the left hand is more highly emphasized as well as the advisability of being discreet about toilet functions. After the age of two and a half or three, scolding gets more intense and the child is told it is dirty or bad for urinating on the floor. Naturally the severity of the training depends to a large extent as well on the particular situation, the mood and personality of the mother, or other socializing agents present, as well as the age of the child. Thus a grandmother was observed who was not overly excited when her two-year-old grandson urinated on the floor, but she became quite angry when he wet her bed.

861 Patient but continuous teaching by adults in the household is a constant part of everyday activities for the young child. The following excerpt from field notes tells its own story:

> A plate of food is on the floor of the hut gathering flies. The grandmother says to her little grandson, "Kachella, pick up the plate. Now, take it over there. Be careful, there is food on the plate. Now, take that other plate and cover the food over. (Plates are made of grass.) That's right, very good." This simple operation which would have taken the grandmother a few seconds has been carried out after two patient minutes of instruction to the child who could not yet speak more than a few words.

867 868 Childhood also ushers in the establishment of sex roles. Boys are now called "small boys" and girls are "small girls" or "three heads" referring to the three-pronged hair style of prepubescent girls. Boys and girls wear different clothes and begin fairly soon to associate with members of their own sex and to carry out chores that are specifically for boys or for girls. In play groups based on sex they wander freely about the village or neighborhood of the city gathering like flies to honey at the slightest hint of any excitement, and wandering further afield from their own compound as they get older. The girl comes quickly under the authority of the women of the household especially her own mother if she is brought up at home. She learns the intricacies of preparing food, carrying water, and the ever-present task of grinding millet either at a quern or by pounding it on a large wooden mortar. The boys begin to gather firewood, help with the farming, run messages, gather grass for a horse if there is one, tend the goats and sheep of the compound, and learn the family dry-season occupation. Pressure to learn these skills is slow but definite. Punishments are rare, but severe. The child is beaten with a rod or whip until neighbors and friends succeed in persuading the parents to cease or desist. Reasons given for the beating often concern the sudden, or con-

861 868

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tinual dereliction of some duty although outright malfeasance such as stealing can also bring swift and awesome retribution. For example, a young boy was beaten for continually omitting to gather grass for his father's horse. This is a skill that a boy should acquire by the age of six or eight, possibly nine at the very latest. When punishment occurs its severity is noted by all children within earshot, and thus the beating of one child of the village or ward serves notice on all that punishment is not just a matter of threats but may become a reality if limits are transgressed.

That such household learning soon becomes habitual can be seen any day in a Bornu village by watching children. Even a little girl of three and a half can accomplish tasks involving quite a lot of dexterity. One little girl of this age was passed a straw mat plate and separately given some paper clips. She neatly put the paper clips on the plate and began her own already advanced imitation of the quick, deft, jiggling movements associated with the sifting of ground-nut shells. None of her paper clips was dropped, and she soon passed the plate back saying, "Here are some sifted ground nuts."

Sometimes play takes in both sexes and is more complex than simple imitation like the one above. Thus for several days a large group of young children from the age of five through ten may organize a "wedding." The "bride" and "groom" are chosen as are the various kindred, the best man, the leading woman, etc. Care is taken to practice as many of the details of the adult virgin wedding ceremony as they can manage including even a mock impregnation, in this case with a small doll. Wedding foods in miniature are passed around to the adults who accept the mock food with a show of seriousness although they may comment on or question some detail of the ceremony carried out mistakenly or omitted by the children. Adults expressed satisfaction with this type of play and remarked on its instructive value for the children. Such play is related to an even more complex form called *mai-mai*, which is no longer practiced in Bornu. In playing *mai-mai* the young children in a village put on a pageant. They chose a king, nobles, servants, slaves, wives, gave titles to everyone, and behaved for several days in the guise of these socio-political roles. Mock battles were fought, slaves taken and justice meted out in a mock court. Seniority was established by age and consent. The organization was temporary like the "wedding" and disbanded after a few days. During periods when adults are out of the compound, away at a market, or working in the fields during the growing season, children often play house. The group gets together and appoints "fathers," "wives," and "children." The little children may actually cook for their "husbands" on such occasions and the couples go into a hut in the compound where sexual play is carried on. They are, however, soon called back to the larger group where it has been declared "morning" by another child who has announced the "morning prayers" signifying that night has passed. Boys are aware that such play should stop when they can ejaculate. From then on they are men; sex is a serious affair and unmarried girls are illegitimate objects of sexual intercourse. However such prepubescent sex derived from playing "house" is widespread, or to paraphrase one young informant, "Everyone does such things when they are young."

Boys especially, but girls as well, may also begin some religious instruction during their childhood. Although girls never leave home for this purpose, boys sometimes do after the age of six or seven. In some cases the teacher lives nearby

844 after birth. The birth takes place in a sitting position over a warmed wooden bowl. When the infant arrives it is washed and then continually warmed by the female attendants who heat their hands over [853] a dish of hot coals and then press the body of the child. Almost immediately attempts are made to have the infant feed at the mother's breast. The placenta is buried in the compound with no ceremony.

[782] Men are barred from any direct participation in the actual birth process, but usually pray heavily and/or employ a mallam (Koranic teacher-priest) to pray for the successful outcome of the 846 birth. During the forty-day confinement period there should be no [565] sexual intercourse between spouses. Informants stated that strict adherence to the forty-day confinement rule as well as the sexual taboo may vary among the poorer classes where the woman's economic services are more in demand. However, the first eight days after birth are universally accepted as a time of strict confinement and sexual abstinence.

846 During the first eight days of life the infant is known • 858 as fatu (the little kitten) or kusoto gana (the little stranger) and is referred to when necessary in these terms. This is a strong tabu time for the parents, and they must be sure to maintain all cultural prescriptions to ensure the safety of the infant. Hardly any mention is made in public of the new arrival. Even its sex is unknown except by a few close female friends of the mother who are expected [764] to keep the secret. If it dies during this period, the infant does not receive a proper burial, but is unceremoniously interred in the women's section of the compound.

000 On the Friday within the eight-day period, or several

553 Generally speaking, Kanuri names are passed on through alternative generations. Ideally a man and his wife take turns obtaining names from each of their descent groups. Some men insist that boys be given names from the patrilateral group, while allowing girls to be named after the mother's relatives. As we have seen, a parent may name his child after some high status person thus establishing what is hoped will be a fruitful namesake relationship. 551 There is a non-reciprocal name avoidance between ego and his parents, parents-in-law, and high status persons in general. In order to avoid using a name the parents give the child, a nickname which usually indicates his relationship to the person whose name he bears. 553 Thus many young boys are called Aba gana (small father) or just Aba (father) which indicates that they have been called after the father of one of their parents.

Infancy

858 For the first eighteen months (lunar) the child is referred to exclusively as a tiful (infant, baby) regardless of its sex. This period marks the beginning of the individual's incorporation into society. Its criterion is breast feeding. In social rather than individual terms the period is one of introduction. The infant is introduced to its family, to the friends of the family and 858 to its community. Sibling rivalry is recognized and dealt with 867 gently but firmly. The Kanuri believe that a sibling, especially one who shares one or both of his parents with the new arrival, may exhibit antagonism towards the baby. Very often the older sibling is sent off to a nearby compound, usually to a grandparent, for the period of the birth. It returns to receive gifts from the parents

858 867 on the day of the naming ceremony. This is believed to apply only to young children under the age of five or six; older ones are sufficiently socialized so that rivalry presents no overt problem. At one naming ceremony a small girl of two and a half was observed being brought back from her namesake grandparent's compound where she had been living for the last week. She was admonished upon presentation to the new infant, "This is your new baby —— be gentle with him and look after him." Both the little girl and her full brother aged nine or ten had been given small gifts that day, she, two little glass bangles, and he, a new shirt. Later, after the naming ceremony was over, many of the women in the compound devoted some time to playing with and showing affection to the two elder siblings and pointing out to them what a fine thing it was that they had a new little brother.

854 The new infant spends most of the nursing period with its mother although short sorties with elder female siblings occur now and then. The father although he sees the child often interacts very little with it. The infant learns very soon to sit quietly on the back of its mother while it is swaddled comfortably to be carried about. Toilet practices are simple at this time. At first the child is merely wiped clean by the mother. However, as soon as it can sit up, it is placed facing the mother, astride her ankles and with its back resting on her upturned feet. A little hole is dug in the sandy soil between the ankles and the child has a simple and comforting toilet ready-made for it by the mother. When the baby is finished, the mother washes its genital regions and/or anus with her left hand and covers up the hole. Babies wear only a small

854 shirt, and nothing below the waist, except when they are swaddled to the mother's back. When the baby defecates or urinates indoors, as is often the case, it is cleaned up with no great show of alarm, 853 until the end of the first eighteen months. Breast feeding occurs on demand, and is used as a pacifier.

Childhood

862 With the onset of childhood, which is formalized at eight- [858] een months by weaning, the overt pressures of socialization begin for [114] the young child. No systematic data were gathered on the effects of this formal change-over from breast-feeding. Everyone knew of a wide range of variation in reaction on the part of the infants; some babies wean easily, others require much more training. In the latter case, the more stringent techniques are utilized, but still with a matter of fact, unperturbed attitude towards the inevitability of the weaning procedure.

In most cases the child has a female grandparent either in the compound or nearby. If not, then a senior woman of the compound or of the family helps with the weaning by offering her dry breast as a pacifier. The mother spreads the process over several months by constantly attempting to replace the breast with a cup. When the child runs to its mother desirous of the breast, the parent refers to it negatively, as dirt, or even excrement. With difficult cases bitter tasting grounds of brown leaves are put on the breasts to discourage continued efforts by the child to obtain the mother's milk.

597 It is just after weaning that most Kanuri adoptions take place. A very rough estimate of adoptions, taken from genealogical data, would put the figure at somewhere between 35-45% for the present

861 We have never seen anyone hit a small child, but 158.

> the warnings are frequent. The "boogy-man" threat is more often used as a warning. For example, last month a group of travelling entertainers brought a very large, ugly hyena to town ... apparently Kachella gana was shown the thing from a distance, and ever since the hyena has been used as a deterrent to investigating the contents of medicine bottles, or venturing beyond the compound door. It works, although Kachella is inclined to laugh somewhat incredulously. (1)

Continuing with the same excerpt, it will be noticed that positive as well as negative learning is begun early and definite, patient teaching by socialising adults is a normal part of every day's activities for the young child:

> A plate of food is on the floor of the hut gathering flies. The grandmother says to her little adoptive grandson, "Kachella, pick the plate up. Now take it over there. Be careful, there is food on the plate. Now take that other plate and cover the food over (plates are made of grass). That's right, very good." The operation which would have taken the grandmother a second has been carried out only after two minutes of patient instruction to the child who could not yet speak more than a few words.

858

The inception of sex roles begins with the onset of childhood and the end of weaning. The boys are tada gana (small boys) and wear the appropriate small smock and begin to have their heads shaved in the child hair style of the father's agnatic group. This small boy's hair style often depicts the political affiliations of the father's agnatic group and/or its territorial origins. Thus all the household groups connected to a political leader or coming from a particular town may share the same small boy's hair style. Some lower class informants in the large urban centre stated that they used whatever hair style they pleased for their small boys when it was observed that no rule seemed to be followed.

858
302 After weaning, the girls are fero gana (small virgin girls)

(1) Excerpt from correspondence by Diana Cohen with the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto (1956).

858 or kala yaaku (three heads), the latter referring to the distinctive
302 three pronged hair style of pre-pubertal females. The young girls are soon more fancifully dressed and their eyelids blacked with antimony.

855 Until the age of three or four, children are kept for the
857 most part within the compound, going out only with older members. After four or five, the child begins to explore beyond the compound and meets children of his own sex in the immediate vicinity. These form peer groups who play together and gather together quickly to witness any excitement of the town. They stay away from groups of male elders who may sit conversing under a tree, but otherwise roam the town and later even the surrounding bush area freely as long as their growing amount of household tasks are complete.

868 The girls start to learn the intricacies of preparing food,
[412] carrying water, and the ever present task of grinding millet either on a quern or more commonly in a large wooden mortar. The boys begin to gather firewood, help with the farming, and the family dry season activity, as well as being on hand for running messages. Pressure in the acquisition of these skills is steady and slow but definite. Punishments are rare, but to a Western eye extremely severe. The reason is most often the continual or perhaps sudden relinquishing of a skill which by such time should have already been acquired. A young boy of ten was beaten for omitting to gather grass for his father's horse; this is a skill which boys of seven to nine should have already learned. The severity of the punishment is noted by all children within earshot. Thus the beating of one child in a village or a ward not only punishes his neglect of learned skills but advertises to all, within hearing distance of the child's screams, that punishment is not just a matter of threats but is an awesome, painful reality if limits are transgressed.

593 In the marriage relationship itself there is a conflict
183 between what most Kanuri men expect of their wives - that is to say, subordination - and what they actually experience. It is held that this conflict is due to the woman's ability to subvert the cultural ideal of male dominance through his dependence upon her for much of
[565] his own status in the community. This is less true among the upper
[586] classes where the man is less dependent upon the woman for his status, and at this level there are fewer divorces.

571 The discussion of the Kanuri life cycle along with the material on kinship and marriage has been designed to give a description on interpersonal relations. Although the whole fabric of Kanuri society operates at once, the large scaled structural features of the society are linked behaviourally by these patterns of interpersonal relations. At the level of social stratification, political and economic organization, the organizational patterns of the total society must be seen as operating through and with the modes of interpersonal relations.

561 In the life cycle, we have seen how age statuses are only roughly correlated with the physiological phases of growth, maturity and decline. They are more precisely defined in terms of sequences of skills to be learned and tests to be passed during the lives of individuals.

• 858 During the first eighteen months of life the infant (tiful) is introduced into the company of its family within the context of Kanuri culture. This period sets in motion the learning experiences which guide the new member into full adult participation in the society. Until the end of the tiful stage the individual is treated gently and permissively, and socialization pressure is at a minimum. The tiful

858 is considered too young to understand that it must not do this or that. Its primary task is to survive and feed at the breast while becoming identified as a new member in its immediate society.

867 After weaning (and perhaps adoption) the steady, inexorable process of socialization training is applied to the child. This childhood training teaches the young Kanuri slowly but with ever increasing emphasis the central importance of the behaviour norm. Especially is this true of bèrzum (discipline-respect) whose necessity and moral primacy the growing child is taught to understand and utilize. This means that the child is taught to shift and extend the culturally prescribed modes of behaviour from one situation to another, and from person to person. From the point of view of the individual, childhood 867 training results in a picture of society. Of major importance in this 571 picture or image of society is its personal diffuseness. The person learns that there is not necessarily a final or definite locus of power and authority residing in any particular person. Instead there is rank and status, and the individual learns to respond in a culturally prescribed fashion to many combinations and permutations of these role characteristics by applying the proper behaviour norms. This, in turn, prepares the individual to live in the adult world of Kanuri social relations in which there are multitudes of ranks to which he may be called upon to react.

561 By the end of childhood, as the Kanuri define it, which 867 means somewhere between the ages of nine to thirteen, the sex roles 882 and many of the accompanying behaviours have been learned. From this period onward, the development towards adult status is sharply dif- [582] ferentiated for males and females. Girls enter into their first marriage at this time, while boys begin the occupational training that